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the first place by the boy's *bek-bu*, acting under the uncle's instructions; he visits the girl's village, going to some strange house, and inquires who is the man who will act as the girl's *bek-bu*. The girl's *bek-bu* then acts as intermediary between the boy's *bek-bu* and the girl's 'uncle'.

When a son-in-law is proposed some representative of the girl is always sent to the boy's village to inquire about his character, whether he is peaceful and a good worker; formerly tests of felling wood used to be imposed. Some parents take into account the prospective property of the boy, but personal appearance and the relative age of the two parties are not generally considered. The more pious lamas will only consider lamas as suitable sons-in-law. Care has to be taken that neither party suffers under any hereditary taint.[7]

It usually happens that the boy and girl do not know one another at all before the betrothal; occasionally however a boy and girl who know one another wish to marry; in such cases the boy approaches either his uncle or his *bek-bu* and ask him to enter into negotiations. When widowers with property remarry this is always the case; and usually the man will have already impregnated his wife before the first overtures are made.

There is a distinct tendency for several members of two families or neighbourhoods to marry each other; once one woman from a strange community is brought into a village, she is liable to establish further contacts between members of her old community and those of her new one; and, provided the rules of a descent are not infringed, there is a tendency for a woman's daughters to marry back into their mother's old village. It is quite common for two siblings of one family to marry two siblings of another, whether it be two brothers marrying two sisters, or an exchange of sisters, each brother marrying the sister of the other. The marriage of two people does not affect the subsequent marriages of their families in the same generation in any way, but it is considered preferable for, say, the elder brother of the groom to marry the elder sister of the bride, and the younger, the younger; contrary arrangements are not forbidden, but they involve a readjustment of relationships which is felt to be awkward and uncomfortable, and I never came across nor heard of such an arrangement. In the case of the exchange of daughters the full marriage presents are meant to be given on both sides, and this is nearly always done, though in

[7] See Chapter Five, note 12, p. 139.

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a set of rules by which the union can be continued despite the death of one of the partners. These rules are not uncommon in non-European societies and have been given the technical terms of levirate, by which a man marries his deceased elder brother's wife, and sororate, by which a woman marries her deceased elder sister's husband. The Lepchas employ both of these devices, but their application is very different, and the levirate claims are much more strongly pressed.

In Lepcha theory the husband's group purchases the wife, as is explicitly recognised in the term 'price of the bride', *nyom-sa afaar*, which is used for the *asék* presents; therefore if the husband dies the wife is still the property of his group, and can be married to another member of the same group without further reference to her parents, though on such occasions the wife's parents are actually given small courtesy presents. In theory too the wife has no right to refuse the man offered in the place of her dead husband, or, if she feels an unconquerable repulsion, her group should supply a second woman to replace her. Similarly if the husband wishes to refuse the wife he has inherited he should supply another man in place of himself. In practice these regulations are not always carried out, and relatively seldom if the woman is childless; if the heritable spouse really dislikes her inheritor no compulsion is used to force her to marry him, nor are there any sanctions for this; three women formerly married to inhabitants of Lingthem have in recent years returned to their own homes on the death of their husbands because they did not like their inheritors, or because their inheritors did not like them. In such cases, if the women remarry, the marriage payments are made, not to their family group, but to the family groups of their dead husbands.

The sororate claims are enforced rather differently. On the forty-ninth day after the death of his wife the widower must visit his parents-in-law, taking with him as presents a load of *chi* and a pig; on the receipt of which the parents-in-law consult with all their male relatives and offer him as wife another girl, preferably a real or classificatory younger sister of the first wife. If the man does not wish to accept the offered girl (and if there is nobody else suitable sometimes babies are offered) on the following day he must present his wife's parents with an ox, or, failing that, a pig, a load of *chi*, a big basket of rice and Rs. 5, and ask their permission to refuse the girl and to marry, if he feels so inclined,

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587 into another *ptso*. After the presents this permission is always given automatically.

If the man accepts the girl offered the *asék* is performed one year after the death of the first wife, and the marriage usually shortly after. For second marriages the ceremonies are similar to first marriages but on a rather smaller scale; both the presents and the feasts are only about two-thirds as expensive as for first marriages. When widows remarry the ceremony is slightly altered, and the bride enters her husband's house on the first, instead of the second, day of the marriage feast. Except for sororate spouses it is considered rather difficult for a widower to get an unmarried girl for his second wife, especially if his first wife died young, for this is believed to be a sign that he is unlucky; consequently it is fairly usual for widowers to marry widows. The situation is naturally altered if a widower makes an unmarried woman pregnant.

837 587 Among the Lepchas a man can inherit the wives of all his *elder* brothers, real or classificatory, the wives of all his paternal and maternal uncles real or classificatory, provided these 'uncles' are younger than his parents but not younger than himself, and all the *younger* sisters of his wife, real or classificatory. Conversely a woman can be inherited by all her husband's younger brothers, all the sons of her husband's uncles, and all the husbands of her elder sisters, real or classificatory. With all these potentially hereditable spouses the Lepcha has the right to copulate during the lifetime of their husbands (or wives) and in nearly all cases these rights are taken full advantage of, as opportunity offers; opportunity is naturally greater with people who live in the same district, and distance often prevents men taking advantage of the right to sleep with the younger sisters of their wife, and women with the husbands of their older sisters, since they most often live in different parts of the country.

837 With the wives of their real elder brothers Lepchas have in theory a right to use force, if they will not copulate willingly; the younger brothers are considered to have contributed to the marriage price of the bride and therefore to have, as it were, a legal right. In point of fact such a use of force never arises; Lepcha women know that their husbands' younger brothers have the right of access; and casual sexual relationships are so unimportant emotionally for Lepchas that few women would think it worth while making a fuss. If the women have a real repulsion for their husband's younger brothers nothing can be done about it, for,

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582 835 will also be his wife's elder sister and equated with his mother-in-law; similarly the elder brother will not have access to or be able to marry his wife's younger sister, because she is equated with his daughter-in-law. If there was an interval between the first and second marriages both parties would have the right of access until the second *asék*; to avoid such complication it is desirable that the marriages of pairs of brothers and sisters take place as nearly simultaneously as is possible.

The semi-diagrammatic complementary relations which are set up when two brothers marry and have sons are worth tabulating. The elder brother has to respect his younger brother's wife as his 'daughter-in-law', but his son need not as he can sleep with and inherit her; the younger brother need not respect his elder brother's wife as he can sleep with and inherit her, but his son must respect her as his 'big mother'.

● 587 In the event of a widow being left with young children it is essential that a husband be supplied from her husband's group, and this is usually done without any sort of friction. Thus Chano, himself a childless widower, recently inherited the wife and three young children of his dead elder brother. This is the one situation in which the provision of a levirate spouse is imperative; if the widow is sterile or the children all grown up and married there is no compulsion and such women often return to their own home. Not always however; at the age of 68 the second Dorjé Lapoon married *en secondes noces* his widowed 'aunt' (actually the wife of his grandmother's brother's son) Pumri, who was then aged 73. The two had however carried on a fairly constant concubinage in the last forty years of Pumri's husband's lifetime.

The chief disadvantage of the sororate and levirate claims is that it quite occasionally happens that there is considerable disparity between the ages of the spouses, and in particular that the woman will be considerably older than the man. A relatively poor family is liable to hand on a satisfactory woman even to a boy of nine or ten; the converse seldom occurs as a man will not accept a very young girl as a second wife. During my stay in Lingthem such a case was causing considerable dispute. Kahlyeu's grandson, Chélé, at the age of ten had inherited the wife of a dead younger uncle. This girl had only been married a year before the death of her husband, and was at the time only fifteen, but the psychological difference in their ages was far greater than the real difference. Chélé was a very bright and intelligent little boy, but

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nervous and physically thin and rather undersized. He was remarkable for having an almost complete memory of all that had happened to him after the age of eighteen months. Unlike the vast majority of Lepcha children he showed a marked disinclination to grow up, and appeared happiest playing in the company of children younger than himself. His mother died about three years ago, and when he was about six his father committed suicide by eating arrow poison and attempted drowning, after he had been publicly reprimanded by his wife's family for neglecting her while she was ill. After the death of his parents Chélé lived alone with his grandfather and a middle-aged distantly related 'aunt'.

As opposed to Chélé's psychological backwardness his wife, a younger sister of the Mandal's first wife, was somewhat advanced for her age and appeared a fully-developed self-possessed young woman. After the death of her first husband she had gone home to her family for a year, but in May 1937 she returned to take up life with her husband, staying for the time being with her elder sister. Chélé did not want to get married at all, and would run away from his wife whenever he saw her. Old Kahlyeu used to run after him and gave him extremely severe beatings to bring him to his senses; but Chélé was obstinate, and when he was scolded, used to threaten to drown himself in the river. A few children occasionally make such suicide threats when they are publicly reproached or consider themselves ill-used (most of the children I know of who make or have made such threats have exceptional early histories, usually orphans or adopted children) but these threats are never taken seriously and there is no instance of a child putting such threats into action. But with Chélé people are a trifle anxious; he is an abnormal child, with his exceptional intelligence and babyish behaviour.

The situation did not advance in any way while I was observing it. Chélé continued obstinate; his wife seemed fairly placid and non-attached about the whole affair, but even presuming the two do live together the situation is naturally somewhat unstable. A few years ago Takneum *youmi*'s son Itup inherited a wife under rather similar circumstances; when he was twelve his wife became pregnant with an obvious bastard. This wife died young and Itup married again; the bastard, Seryop Katoo, was brought up as a younger brother of Itup. It also occasionally happens, as in the case of Kurma's stepfather, that a man is childless because he has inherited a wife near the menopause.

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587 595 If, after a number of years of marriage, a man's wife is sterile, he has a right to apply to his wife's family for a second wife, providing his first wife agrees. The formalities entailed in this request are the same as those which have to be performed after the death of a first wife;[12] an extra preliminary present has to be given, but the subsequent expenses for the marriage are slightly less. In theory it is only permissible to take a second wife from the first wife's *ptso*, and ideally this second wife should be the first wife's real or classificatory younger sister. This is recognised in the terms with [601] which co-wives are always referred to; the Nepali words *jethi* and *kanchi*, meaning 'eldest sister' and 'youngest sister' are always used; Lepcha has no equivalent terms to indicate the position of a child in the order of birth. In the great majority of cases the ideal conditions are observed, and the two wives, if not actual sisters, are of the same *ptso* and use kinship terms. In cultural theory the co-wives have already an established habit of cooperation and cohabitation which only needs to be renewed, and the situation of co-wife is meant to be an agreeable one. This expectation is not always justified; occasionally co-wives quarrel; but the majority are glad for the companionship of a close relative, and the lessened work which their presence means. The husband is meant to spend alternate nights with each of them.

595 In Lingthem there are seven men with two wives each; but only in three cases was the second wife taken because the first wife was sterile. In two of the cases the second wife is indeed only a co-wife by courtesy; Asang gave a home to the middle-aged widow of his elder brother, because she had nowhere else to go; and for the same reason Gongyop took in his wife's sister. In this second case the hospitality was not long accepted; though nearly sixty years old, this woman, Samblyou, with her elder sister Mrs. Takal, is the most promiscuous woman in the village, and after distributing her favours in nearly every direction, including the seduction of a number of the younger boys, she is now cohabiting with Zumba, a widower twelve years younger than herself.

Chala Mandal has had in all four wives in two pairs; the first wife he gave to a 'younger brother', who lived with him; after her death he also gave him her equally sterile sister; this second wife returned to her family after the death of the

[12] See p. 159.

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831 522 two to *asék* a woman of forty were also considered funny. These two old stalwarts were, however, somewhat exceptional; most Lepchas after the age of seventy abandon all such thoughts and actions. I question whether the generally expressed fear of surviving one's strength into extreme old age is in any way consciously connected with the fear of losing potency.

831 The Lepchas' attitude towards sex is extremely forth-right and unemotional. They openly equate sexual activity with eating, saying that the one is as natural and as necessary as the other; and they tend to treat both activities as of about equal emotional importance. Sexual activity, unless it forms part of a larger pattern of give-and-take, sets up no social obligations between the two parties; neither is considered to be indebted or especially benefited, and copulation entails no further duties. The Lepcha attitude to a transitory sexual partner is summed up in the Edwardian smoking-room joke: 'Since when does sleeping together constitute a social introduction?' The Lepchas are much occupied with sex; it is the subject of much of their conversation and nearly all their humour; it is regarded as almost as essential as food. Sex is intended to be exclusively sensual and almost impersonal; the culture makes no allowance for deep personal relationships passionately adhered to between sexual partners. If sex becomes emotionally serious it is always a nuisance and, if either of the partners are betrothed or married, it may be disastrous.

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585 [587] The majority of marriages take place in the autumn months after the harvest is gathered; a few, however, take place at other periods, particularly second marriages, which are usually celebrated an exact calendar year after the death of the first spouse. It is necessary to find an auspicious day for the marriage, taking into consideration [781] the birth years of the two contracting parties. Should a relation on either side die on the marriage day it is a bad omen, and signifies either the sterility or early death of the wife.

The groom's family usually spend several months before the date fixed in collecting the necessary food and animals. Just before the marriage date (the number of days before depends on the journey necessary) the groom goes with his *bek-bu* to his bride's house taking with him the hind leg of a pig, a scarf and a rupee as a present for his mother-in-law. On his arrival the sisters and other girl friends

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585 the song beginning, ' Father, help me ! Mother, help me ! ' The
533 dancing is completely unorganised, and merely consists of indi-
535 viduals hopping or stamping more or less rhythmically as they feel disposed. Unlimited food and drink are provided, and it is considered desirable and almost inevitable that everybody should get as drunk as possible. There is a strong sexual overtone to the atmosphere and towards evening many couples separate and go off into the forest for a short spell; they mostly return to the house where the feast is being held before night has completely fallen.

585 At the only marriage feast that I witnessed—that of Ongden with his second wife—I noted ' About seven o'clock the noise was exactly like a very crowded English pub at closing time: the atmosphere was unbelievable. Nearly a hundred very dirty people in two small rooms which had been shut up as much as possible with the balconies closed by wooden partitions and so on; there was a huge fire of wet wood smoking hard so that one could only just see across the room. In the kitchen some people were sleeping round the fire while others were still cooking; at one side there was a very bloody mess where sausages were being made from the entrails by three young men; others were asleep in the muck. In the *dé-ong* the ground was so crowded with sitters and sleepers that there was only just room for the female relations of the husband to circulate with their wooden ladles of boiling water with which they constantly replenished the bowls of *chi*; they appeared to be the only relatively sober people present. The bride and her party sat as if they had never moved, in their long line against the wall of the *dé-ong*; the groom wandered about rather disconsolately, talking very little to anyone. Old Adér, who had previously pulled up his dress and exposed himself during the sacrifice, started singing in a minor key dragging over the syllables; whereupon Lumba's *jethi* (that is his first wife), who is renowned as a singer, got up and asked for some meat to be given her as a fee for the song she was going to sing; she was given some and started singing, but nobody took much notice though everybody said " hush " ; the singers walked about as if they were cabaret artists. The pace of the evening got slower and slower and sleepier and sleepier; the children sat about or slept. It would have been very rude for anybody to go home before sunrise the next day.'

585 This marriage of Ongden with a widow was slightly irregular
587 and abbreviated, first because it was for both parties a second marriage, and secondly because the bride had been living with her

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husband for some months before he had assembled enough food for the ceremony. The ceremony only took place for one day instead of for two and the bride and her party went straight away on arrival into the house. The day before the marriage the bride withdrew to a village one day's walk away instead of to her own home which was three days away, where she met her bridal party. After the ceremony the post-nuptial visits were curtailed, but it was considered improper for the newly married couple to start living at home at once and so they spent a few days at the house of his 'nephew' Tingkep.

Early in the morning after the marriage feast the bride and groom, together with the bride's party and two friends of the groom to carry the heads and legs of the oxen, set out on a return visit to the bride's house. When they have arrived the groom stops as little time as possible; overnight if the bride's home is some way away, otherwise not even that. On that day all the guests who were present at the marriage feast return with gifts of crops or *chi*, which they give according to their wish and ability as a help towards the very considerable expense of the marriage feast.

Two weeks later the groom goes to fetch his bride again. Either at this visit or at the subsequent one the girl's father provides a feast for the newly married couple. When the bride and groom leave the girl's house her father sends back as a present to the man's father a load of *chi* and a load of rice. The couple then stop a week in the husband's house; at the end of that time they go back to the girl's house, taking with them as presents to the girl's parents from the groom's parents exactly the same presents as the girl herself had brought. The couple then spend a few days at the bride's home and then finally return to the groom's. At this final removal the girl brings with her such private property as she may possess in the shape of animals or harvested grain as well as her clothes and jewels.

Some time during the first year of marriage the bride may go to visit her parents with a present of a pig and they will in return give her a milch cow or a heifer. This does not always take place, usually only if the bride's parents are relatively rich.

If the horoscopes of the married pair are unfavourable or if ill-luck is foretold, this ill-luck can be temporarily averted in the following way: two lamas will make small millet images of the husband and wife called *parr-ko* and into these the lamas will transfer all the ill-luck which is foreseen in the sacred books. When

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amicably settled, for nothing happened for the next five weeks. It then transpired that the Dorje-Lopön and Jiroong's wife had made a private arrangement to meet from time to time, and that they had not the slightest intention of putting an end to their affair. During this time, although the Dorje-Lopön was living in the same house as Chapshay and Atyok, it was noticed that he had no relations with them; and it was on this account that people became suspicious. Chapshay and Atyok put up with this state of affairs for a further three months and then departed to their own home. An official protest followed and this time a divorce was arranged, as a result of which the Dorje-Lopön was required to give one ox, one pig, one copper-pot and twenty rupees in cash as compensation. As he had no ready cash he borrowed the twenty rupees from the monastery funds; and has still not liquidated the debt. Having settled this affair he announced that he had done with women for the rest of his life, and that henceforth he would remain celibate. He went so far as to say that he would not marry Jiroong's wife even should the opportunity occur. Two months later Jiroong went down to the Mandal, told him that the Dorje-Lopön had again started meeting his wife, and asked what he should do. Another meeting was held; and as a result of its deliberations Datoop was ordered never to let his father out of the house by himself. The Dorje-Lopön, although head of the monastery, was told of this order and specifically warned that he must only visit the monastery for the purpose of attending public ceremonies, and that in no case was he ever to enter the *Hla-gong*. In spite of this the old man still contrived regularly to meet Jiroong's wife, as a result of which her husband decided to divorce her. For some time all three lived together in Jiroong's house, and in the meantime the Dorje-Lopön helped Jiroong in his fields.

Poor Jiroong deserved a better fate than has actually been his lot. After a number of friendships here and there he grew tired of an aimless existence and decided to marry again. There then came to the village the sister of Tempa. She was

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visiting her brother, who had left his home and settled in Lingtem. She was not too old, unmarried, and not uncomely. Jiroong started to visit her; and soon decided that she was the one girl who could change his life: she was. He worked hard in his fields; and before long had saved enough money to buy the necessary pig. Tempa was willing to let his sister go; and so the two were married. They now have two children of their own; but life is not all roses. Mrs. Jiroong, it appears, is fond of the bottle; and when she indulges displays an uncontrollable temper. Although he is now a senior Lama, Jiroong has to submit to the indignity of finding his wife debarred from entering the monastery. This he could bear; but unfortunately his wife cares nothing for monogamy. He could bear this too, if only she would entertain her friends in private.

When Jiroong married again the Dorje-Lopön and his latest wife decided to set up house on their own. She died a few years later and he now lives alone with his only other child, a boy of eighteen, whose mother was the fourth wife. Although still titular head of the monastery the old man finds it hard to make ends meet. He was rich at one time, but his money, and that of his son, has mostly gone in smoothing out his matrimonial tangles. At eighty-two he is looking for a sixth wife; but the girls in Lingtem, like the widow who married Tristram Shandy's Uncle Toby, are somewhat doubtful of his ability to please them.

* * * * *

The second Dorje-Lopön is sixty-nine, and entered into matrimony for the first time only a year ago, when he married an elderly Mun, Pom-ri, on the death of her husband; but the pair had been lovers for forty years. The Dorje-Lopön always called himself a celibate; but this is what actually happened: While he was still a boy, his elder brother was married, but shortly after left for Gangtok, leaving his wife at home. The Dorje-Lopön would in any case have had the right to cohabit with her; but in this

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already noted, that he is the only man in the district who knows how to keep away rain. As it is, he is the mainspring of the local Church, and is destined one day to be its head. He is at present thirty-five, and was married at seventeen to a girl five years his junior. Before becoming a Lama he studied for five years. In those days there were six other boys all learning with the same teacher, and they used to compete amongst themselves, and so learnt rapidly. His father, too, was a Lama and in his younger days spent some years at a monastery in Gangtok in order to receive higher instruction. While he was there, though already married, he fell in love with a girl who eventually became his second wife. On his return to Lingtem he told his wife what had happened; but she argued that since she had borne him two children it was unnecessary to bring another woman to the house. Tafoor's father, however, said he would love them both equally; and his wife therefore agreed to the second marriage. Although Tafoor's mother did not know it, the second wife had already given birth to a daughter while the pair were living together in Gangtok, and this child was later married to the son of the local artist. After the second wife had established herself in Lingtem she refused to allow Tafoor's father to have any further connection with his first wife, whereupon Tafoor's mother married a man named Dunbyo, with whom she still lives, Dunbyo giving Tafoor's father a pig as compensation.

Tafoor has four children, the eldest of whom, Chimpet, a boy of fourteen, is learning to be a Lama. He is rather sullen in appearance and spends most of his time catapulting birds, in the imitation of which he displays quite remarkable skill. His head is badly scarred, due to the fact that his mother, a rather ill-tempered woman, hit him with a burning brand when he was small. His father says he is quite intelligent but will not apply himself to his studies, which he started some six months ago. The second Dorje-Lopön, his grandfather's brother, is teaching him, and so he lives at home. Chimpet says he wants to grow up quickly, so that he can enjoy himself properly. He appears to be unusually young for his age, and has not yet reached the age of puberty.

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159 to have an altar-room, and also a set of books, to read which
342 Lamas are called in as necessary. I noticed that by means of
622 bamboo conduits water was made available inside the house,
[312 where it dripped into a huge copper vessel. This was the only
336] house in Lingtem which might be described as having "running water."

159 The Mandal was an only child, and when his father had
587 already handed over most of his work, he adopted another boy in order to have someone to work the fields. On the death of his father the Mandal handed his wife, of whom he was growing tired, over to this adopted brother; and then married again. The first wife died shortly after, whereupon the Mandal gave his brother the second; and himself married a third. The second wife, who died four years ago, did not care for this arrangement and soon returned to her own home, whereupon the adopted brother was presented with wife number three; and the Mandal married yet again.
[585] Since he and his brother were living in the same house no ceremony was performed when these cast-off women were handed on; but this would have been necessary had the two brothers been living in separate houses. The Mandal has an only daughter, and passionately desires to have a son. It is this, he says, that has led him into matrimony time after
[789] time; and he has not finished yet! The people saw he will never have a son, since in the time of his father a curse was laid on the family. This was done by an evil-minded Lama, who thought that if there were any more children they would claim the land adjacent to their house. This was the property of some people who had died without heirs, and it had not at that time been reallotted.

159 It is generally believed that the Mandal is not the son of his
[848] supposed father, who was impotent. Once, when the father was absent from home, his mother, anxious lest the family die out altogether, induced a certain man to come and visit her
159 daughter-in-law. The story is known to the whole of the
837 village, and is said to have been made public by Chala's own biological father. He appears to have been a man of

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835 in no case would a man ever have any sexual relations with
837 the wives of his younger brothers, or with a woman of the same clan as himself. This would constitute incest; and while it is practically impossible to investigate the subject, I am inclined to think, by reason of the horror with which it is regarded, that incest does not occur.

587 In addition to the sexual rights which a man has with his
428 elder brothers' wives it is customary for a widow to be inherited by one of the deceased's younger brothers, preferably the next in succession. Should he have no brothers living the widow may pass to a nephew. It makes no difference if the man in question already has a wife of his own: the widow comes to him as an additional wife, but in no case is any marriage ceremony performed, the woman being merely inherited in the same way as any other piece of property. It is not to be supposed, however, that this arrangement is carried out without the consent of both the parties concerned. The woman is at liberty to remarry with whom she wishes; but it should be remembered that the man who would be legally entitled to inherit her (*Oong-op* is the technical term in use) has probably cohabited with her for years, as a result of which the pair are probably on intimate terms, so that the new relationship is merely a public recognition of a long-standing arrangement. Because of this, most widows are perfectly content to remain with one or other of their deceased husband's brothers.

It sometimes happens that a widow is herself perfectly willing to be inherited by a man who does not care for her, or who, for some reason or other, does not want an additional wife. In these circumstances he need not take her into his home, but it is incumbent upon him to find the woman another husband. In a case of this sort the full marriage ceremonies would have to be carried out, and the usual gifts provided, the expense of which would fall, not upon the proposed husband, but upon the man who should by rights have taken the widow into his own home. Should the reverse happen, and the widow be unwilling to go to an

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587 428 *Oong-op* who is prepared to accept her, then the new husband inherits her. Such cases do not often happen, and only then, I think, because, while customary law is quite clear on the point of widow inheritance, there is no means by which it can be enforced. The system of widow inheritance is considered very objectionable by "civilised" Lepchas, and in the Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts has been completely dropped, even among the non-Christian community; but there is no doubt that it is a satisfactory method of providing for widows in a community which does not permit women to inherit property; and it is certainly less hypocritical than the Hindu system, for instance, in which a widow remains on in the house but does not actually marry any of her deceased husband's brothers. The Lepcha system does at least recognise and regularise the needs of the body; for no one but an ascetic would expect a young (and perhaps attractive) widow to remain chaste for the rest of her life, whatever tribal law had to say on the subject.

It sometimes happens that a widow has no *Oong-op*. Should she be of an age which makes it unlikely that she will procure another husband in the ordinary way, she may go and live with an elder sister, always provided that the latter's husband is willing to receive her. This arrangement, once again, does not call for any very great readjustment; for, as we have already seen, this man too has always had the legal right to copulate with her. But there are always a certain number of middle-aged widowers who find it difficult to persuade a young girl to marry them, human nature being what it is, and so it happens that a widow in these circumstances often marries some older man who has lost his wife and wishes to marry again. The whole system seems admirably constituted so as to provide for everybody. A few actual examples will perhaps help to make the working of it clear:

587 Chano and his elder brother lived together in one house. Both were married; but Chano's wife died childless some years ago. In the meantime Chano had, of course, the right

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to sleep with his brother's wife whenever he wished. A few 587 ●
years ago the elder brother died. His widow and her three children passed to Chano, and he was thus able to continue his normal life without the expense of remarriage, and with the minimum of readjustment. The children always referred to Chano as their father and he regarded them as his own. The relations within this particular family were so normal and harmonious that it was some considerable time before we realised that Chano was not actually the father of the children.

Here is an example of a different kind:

Gongyop was already fifty when the husband of his wife's younger sister died. There was no one to inherit her; nor was she particularly attractive, so in the circumstances Gongyop felt obliged to offer her a home. He was a sick man at the time, and possibly found one wife sufficient. This, however, was not to the lady's liking; for although she was well over forty and had a grown-up son of her own, she did not consider this sufficient reason for spending her nights alone. She soon struck up an acquaintance with Zumbu, a well-to-do childless widower, who lived in a nearby house. He in the meantime had been betrothed to a girl some years younger than himself. It was a good match for her, since Zumbu was a hard worker and owned considerable property: she would have presided over the affairs of one of the best houses in Lingtem, and was accounted lucky. For some obscure reason, however, she fell in love with Aga, an unattractive man of thirty-seven, with a wall eye and a hideous squint. He had, moreover, a pretty wife of his own, who had already borne him three children. He refused to listen to his wife's entreaties and insisted upon bringing Zumbu's betrothed to live in the house. He cannot at present marry her, since the village elders have so far been unable to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the case. Having been formally betrothed to Zumbu she is to all intents and purposes already his wife; but, as everybody knows, it is easy to take the horse to the water, so to speak, but you cannot

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●587 make it drink! In the meantime Gongyop's sister-in-law is living with Zumbu in a purely unofficial position. No attempt, of course, is made to hide their relationship, since in the eyes of the village no sin has been committed. It is likely that the pair will eventually marry; but they cannot do so until such time as Aga's responsibility in the case is settled. His conduct is not approved of, since he already has a wife and children. Had his first wife proved to be sterile there would have been no valid objection to his taking another; nor in such a case would she have made any protest. In no circumstances, however, should he have selected a girl who was already betrothed to another. It would have been perfectly easy, of course, for him to amuse himself with this particular girl in secret; but for an unknown reason that arrangement did not appear to suit either of them, and they insisted upon coming out into the open.

[626] Neither is ostracised by the rest of the village, since Lepchas are extremely easy-going in all things; but the atmosphere of Aga's home is at the moment somewhat strained, and his wife talks of leaving him at the earliest opportunity. It is probably only love for her children that has kept her there so long.

587 428 Here is another case of inheritance, which shows how a woman may sometimes be inherited before the death of her husband. Such cases are common:

Aplung, Rigiya, and Gyatso were three brothers who lived at home with their parents. Aplung, the eldest, was married first, and while the other two were still quite young. His wife did not care for him overmuch, and he was himself more interested in some other girl. He eventually married her; but before this his original wife was handed over, without any marriage ceremony of course, to Gyatso, the youngest of the three brothers. In the meantime Gyatso ran away to Gangtok, whereupon Rigiya inherited the wife. He was actually already betrothed to another girl, but she did not care for him and had also run off to Gangtok. It would make a better story if I could report that she had eloped with

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Gyatso; but such is not the case. As it happens, everything has turned out for the best, and Rigiya and his wife are living happily together. It should be noted that, technically speaking, he might be said to have married his younger brother's wife, thus contracting an incestuous alliance. It should be remembered, however, that the girl was first married to his elder brother, so that from a legal point of view he is held to have married his elder and not his younger brother's wife.

Cheli, aged ten, is the grandson of old Kahlyeu by his second wife. His father died when he was a baby, whereupon his mother remarried almost at once and went to live in some other village, leaving him to the care of his grandfather. Kahlyeu also had a son by his first wife. He too died young, leaving a son who himself died a few years later, having married just before. The widow, who is now fourteen, is the *Oong-op* of Cheli. In case this seems unduly complicated I should add that Cheli has inherited the widow of his deceased (classificatory) elder brother, since both are the grandchildren of the same man. The pair are not at present living together, since Cheli is not yet old enough to cooperate. It is thought, however, that in a couple of years' time he will be able to fulfil his duties as a husband, after which he will bring the girl to his grandfather's home. In the meantime she is living with her mother in a distant village and he goes to spend a few days with her from time to time. No marriage ceremony will be necessary.

* * * * *

It must be obvious to anyone who has read so far that in a society with the sexual promiscuity permitted by the Lepchas there can be no room for jealousy, if the people are to live in harmony. In a recent article in *The New Statesman and Nation* (June 26th 1937) Dr. Harry Roberts discusses this very subject:

"So far as people who æsthetically and intellectually matter are concerned," he writes, "the two great causes of marital failure are boredom and jealousy; and the greatest of

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585 *Gor-nen*, which is made up of sixteen pounds of grain of various
591 sorts and one complete load of chi-millet. As soon as the pair
[431] reach home the *Gor shun*, which, as we have already seen, was specially constructed for the accommodation of the bride's party, is knocked down without further ceremony; but it should on no account be demolished until the husband returns with his wife.

591 Seven days later husband and wife once again set off for
[431] the girl's home, taking with them the inevitable load of chi-millet, and eight pounds of grain. Nothing is laid down as to when they should return; and from this time the pair continues to divide its time between the two houses, or at least to pay periodical visits to the girl's home.

[431] One year after marriage a girl may, if she feels so disposed, present her parents with a pig's carcass and another load of chi-millet. This is kn n as *Nyim phet;* and when it is given it is customary for the parents to make a return present of a milch cow: this is called *Pi jong*. The cow is not, however, actually given to the girl but is merely shown her. If she gives her parents another *Nyim phet* the following year the *Pi jong* becomes her property and she may then take the cow away with her when she leaves.

585 Whatever we may think of Lepcha marriage, it does at
571 least afford a chance for the village to break away for a day or two from its otherwise dull routine, and gives people from distant villages an excuse to meet and talk things over. Moreover, everybody knows exactly what he is expected to contribute: in lean times the dictates of custom are sufficiently observed by putting as little as a couple of annas in the *Ong kay*. But in any case the guest is free from our periodic nightmare of "what shall I give?"; and the bride and bridegroom in their turn are spared an accumulation of the Lepcha equivalent of unwanted plated cruets. It all seems admirably contrived; and a good time is had by all.

●587 14*th March:*

Ongden, a man of fifty and the father of the largest family

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587 in Lingtem, is being married to-day. His first wife died a year ago, and he is now marrying a childless widow of twenty-four. It seems that in the eyes of the village he has 177 struck lucky; for in normal circumstances it is not considered auspicious for a girl to marry a widower. In this particular case, however, the girl's deceased husband had no brothers; nor was anyone else entitled to inherit her, so the present arrangement suits both parties. The only fly in to-day's 781 ointment is that the birth-signs of the bride and bridegroom are antagonistic; so much so, in fact, that many people think the marriage foredoomed to failure. Ongden, however, is quite well-off, and in any case, being himself a Lama, can probably obtain special terms from the faculty for the services which will restore the balance of ill-luck. But in view of the special circumstances both he and his bride think the risk worth taking.

587 We were summoned to the house at nine-thirty, but noth-
273 ing much was happening when we arrived. We went first to the kitchen, where some thirty or forty people were sitting quietly soaking, after which we were shown into the altar-room, where the actual ceremony will take place. Six Lamas were sitting against the wall: they too were drinking. The second Dorje-Lopön appeared to be in charge, and the others all had 534 instruments, the usual six-foot trumpets, clarionets and drums.

778 On the altar were a number of *tormas* of rice, decorated
587 with dabs of coloured butter. Into these were stuck several rather crudely coloured pictures of gods, the centre one of which was said to represent Guru Rimpoche. Behind these one of the usual Tibetan pictures had been hung; but it was so old and tattered as to make its details unrecognisable. There was also a small brass vessel filled with holy water, into the neck of which a peacock's feather had been stuck; also a beer bottle, said to contain spirits. I also noticed a number of small bowls filled with rice and other grains, and several oranges and a heap of walnuts. In front of all was a row of 273 small lamps, the last of which was only lighted when the bride arrived.

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587 More guests now started to arrive, and as each one came in
[788] he prostrated himself in front of the altar and then sat down on the floor. By eleven o'clock it was said that some 130 guests were present; and certainly there was not even room on the floor to stretch out one's legs. We had to sit cross-legged on a small carpet, which was unfortunately placed too far away from the wall to enable one to lean back, as a result of which I soon had an intolerable ache in the small of my back.

At about midday the Lamas started to tune up their instruments and to chant in a desultory way. All but one read out of a book. I was told that the chanting consisted in the endless repetition of the names of hundreds of gods. No
[781] one paid the slightest attention to what was going on; nor did the Lamas themselves seem to concentrate overmuch on what they were doing. The chanting alternated with bursts of instrumental playing, with frequent intervals for drinking in between. After a time the whole performance degenerated into a semi-somnolent drone, rather like bees on a hot afternoon in summer: but every now and then a loud bang on the cymbals would wake the rest of the performers into a brief frenzy of cacophony, which soon subsided into a drone again. Apart from the music, the atmosphere in the Black Hole of Calcutta must, I imagine, have been somewhat like this.

While we were waiting hopefully for something to happen I asked Dhawa to find out if the bride and bridegroom were
[836] previously acquainted. This caused much laughter in view of the fact that she is expecting a baby in about three months' time.

The bridal party arrived at about one o'clock; but since this was a second marriage for both the parties concerned Ongden did not trouble to escort the bride from her home. As the party arrived he was standing outside the house, but he paid not the slightest attention to the procession; nor did anyone take any notice of him. The bridal party went straight inside the house and took up their places along one wall. The bride kept the lower part of her face hidden in a

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cloth, but I do not think she was really shy: this was merely 587●
the attitude proper to such an occasion.

The chanting and music continued at intervals; and still [781]
no one paid any attention. A little later Ongden himself
came in and sat down on the floor at the end of the row of
the bride's attendants. His entry did not seem to be in any
way formal; but almost as soon as he was seated the bride's
Pi-bo got up and made a short speech. While this was in
progress general conversation ceased: but before it was
finished one of the Lamas cut in with what was obviously [831]
an obscene remark, whereupon everybody started talking
again.

Nothing further happened until 4.30, when the ceremony
of killing the bullock (as already described) was performed.
By this time we were feeling so battered that a short rest
was imperative if we were to take an intelligent interest in
the evening's proceedings.

We returned at 7.30. Both the kitchen and altar-rooms
were now completely filled with people and the smoke was
so dense that one could only with difficulty see across the
room. Most of those present were now in a semi-maudlin
state; but quite a few had already passed out and lay snoring
peacefully on the floor. Conversation was being carried on [521]
in a subdued undertone: even when under the influence of
drink these people never seem to raise their voices, and still
talk quietly and without losing their tempers. As we arrived
Chotembu's wife was doing her drunken best to sing, at the
same time dancing slowly round the room so far as the
crowd permitted. At one time she came and stood in front
of us and improvised a verse or two. We could not induce
anyone to translate; but I gather the purport was obscene,
since it caused much laughter. In the kitchen room a meal
was being prepared and would later be served to all the
guests. Several people were fast asleep on the floor among
the bullock's intestines and bloody head, a grotesque sight
in the flickering half-light of the smoky fire.

There were no further ceremonies and we left at midnight,

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587 but the party was continued until dawn the next day. Since this was not a first marriage the full three-day festivities were not carried out: nor will Ongden and his bride make the usual ceremonial visit to her people. In this particular case there was, I gather, really no need for him to have done any ceremony except the formal betrothal; but since he is [554] a man of standing in the village he has preferred to do things properly. In any case, no Lepcha will miss the opportunity of throwing a party, provided the necessary funds are available.

15th March:

A number of "corpses" lying about under the bushes. Most of these had removed themselves by nightfall.

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583 Before betrothal a boy usually does a certain amount of work for his future father-in-law, and may even stay in his house should he happen to live in the same village. This service is entirely voluntary and is in no sense looked upon as payment for the bride. After the formal betrothal has taken place, however, the girl's parents can call upon the boy's services for a period of three years; but if the marriage takes place within this period the obligation ceases.

591 When a man has a daughter and no sons he arranges, if 584 possible, that his son-in-law shall live in his house, in which case the boy becomes what is known as a *Komok myok*. In these circumstances he is treated exactly as though he were the real son of the house, except that he has a less hard time. It is not always easy for a man to obtain a *Komok myok* for his daughter; for unless such a boy has several brothers his father will not normally wish to lose him, since it means that he will have no one to help him work his own fields.

431 When a man is so poor that he cannot afford even the 585 minimum marriage gifts everyone in the village helps him. This is looked upon as a gift and is not repayable. It is,